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PLEASE RETURN
MONTANA COMMITTEE FOR THE
HUMANITIES
NEWSLETTER



"PRIVATE RIGHTS AND PUBLIC CHOICES" NEW STATE THEME

Rights will be the primary target of examination in discussions funded in the 1974-75 MCH grant year. The new theme, chosen by the Committee to replace the first two years' theme, "Political Power in Montana," of the MCH state program, will focus on conflicting notions of individual rights in relation to public choices confronting Montana in coming years.

The state theme, a requirement for all National Endowment for the Humanities state-based programs, serves to provide a common focus of concern for all projects funded within a given grant year. The series of public policy discussions are thus linked in a continuing statewide dialogue on a single major area of public concern.

The new theme for Montana, "Private Rights and Public Choices," emerged in part from arguments repeatedly raised in past MCH-sponsored discussions about political power. Debates about who exercised power in various spheres of public life evolved continually into questions of who has the right to exercise what power over whom. Debates about land use policies, for instance, often brought about confrontations between those who defended the position, "My land is my own and I have the right to do whatever I want with it," and those who championed the view, "Land is a public trust held for the benefit of all present and future generations." What was at stake, it emerged, was a basic difference in philosophy between conflicting notions of private and public property rights.

Similar controversies centered around issues involving minorities and women: claims for benefits to a particular group in the name of equality were countered by the rejection of such claims also in the name of equality. These disputes revealed dramatic differences in notions held by different groups

(cont. on p. 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE MONTANA PUBLIC PROGRAM IN THE HUMANITIES

August

- 5-19 "Human Rights Convention," Great Falls. Contact David Irwin, Opportunities, Inc., Box 2532, Great Falls, for further information.
- 13-14 "Montana Agriculture and Politics," Chinook. Contact Tom Ross Chinook, for further information.
- 17 "Right to Know vs. Right of Privacy," panel discussion as part of Montana Press Association Convention, at the Colonial, Helena.

September

- 9-12 "Patterns in Montana Politics," with MSU history professors Roeder and Malone, Flathead High School.
- 25 "Courts of Limited Jurisdiction" Conference, Missoula.
- 26 "Courts of Limited Jurisdiction" Conference, Great Falls.
- 27 "Courts of Limited Jurisdiction Conference," Billings.
- "Future of the Flathead: It's Your Choice," local meetings throughout September and October. Contact Nancy Leifer, Extension Service, Kalispell, for further information.

October

- MCH State Conference, Great Falls.
- "Montana Local Government Review: A Citizen Forum Series," local meetings in Havre, Great Falls, Billings, Lewistown, Butte, Bozeman, Helena, Missoula. Contact Lauren McKinsey, Political Science Dept., U of M, for further information.
- 31, Nov. 1, 2 "Montana and the West: New Directions," conference on Montana history. Helena.

COMMITTEE NOTES

- Out-going President Robert Pantzer of the University of Montana is also leaving his office as Chairman of the Montana Committee for the Humanities, effective in August. At their last Committee meeting MCH members elected Professor Roy Huffman, Vice President for Research at Montana State University, Bozeman, to the position of Chairman. Professor Flora Willett of the English Department of Eastern Montana College, Billings, will replace Professor John Van de Wetering of Missoula as Vice-Chairwoman of the MCH.
- It is with regret that members of the Montana Committee for the Humanities have accepted the resignation of Bruce R. Sievers, Missoula, as Executive Director. Bruce will move to San Francisco in August to become Director of the new California Committee for the Humanities and Public Policy. His assistant, Margaret Kingsland, will be Acting Director until the appointment of a new Director is made by the Committee.

New State Theme (cont.)

about the nature of rights in American society.

What is so fundamental about these controversies is the central position of the concept of rights in the American political system. Indeed, the very basis of the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution lies in the claim for basic human rights held to apply naturally to all people. In opposition to cynics' assertions of "might makes right" and traditional notions of hierarchical rights and privileges, the Founding Fathers established the American polity on the basis of the claim, derived from the European Enlightenment, to freedom and the integrity of the individual.

Such was the ideal, and American history has been characterized by continual attempts toward its realization. However, it is only in the crowded, industrialized, and scarcity-conscious 20th century that competing claims to rights have brought out the inherent conflicts among individual notions of priorities of variously asserted rights. In Montana these competing claims have become particularly acute in recent years. Whereas in prior times in Montana, a free and open frontier spirit and rapidly developing economy permitted the luxury of individual choices without the friction of intergroup pressures; the increasing forces of development, urbanization, and resource use have caused previously independent groups to become progressively interdependent, with resulting disputes over conflicting rights and values.

Moreover, the decisions which will adjudicate among competing claims to rights must inevitably be public. When each side to a conflict justifies its position in terms of traditionally cherished rights, only a public body, such as a legislature or court, can resolve the dispute. Thus rights, while privately held and exercised, are sanctioned ultimately through social decisions.

Concern about rights is central to the humanities, since rights reside in the sphere of the "oughts," which form the historical crux of humanistic concerns, as opposed to the study of "that which is," the traditional province of the sciences.

The new theme's focus on rights is also closely related to the upcoming National Bicentennial Celebration, because of the fundamental role played by natural rights theory in American political and legal history.

Thus, the theme "Private Rights and Public Choices" should serve exceptionally well as a focus for

public dialogue in the upcoming 1974-75 MCH grant year. In particular, the Committee solicits applications for programs dealing with three sub-categories of the theme:

1. Economic and Environmental Rights (property rights, economic freedom, public regulation, etc.)
2. Human Rights (minority rights, equality, self-determination, etc.)
3. Rights of self-expression (lifestyles, censorship, community standards, academic freedom, etc.)

Crucial public decisions which must be made in each of these areas will have important consequences for the future quality of life and human freedom in Montana.

NATIONAL MEETING OF STATE HUMANITIES COMMITTEES

A delegation from the Montana Committee for the Humanities attended the National Meeting of State Humanities Committees and the Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, delivered by Robert Penn Warren under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C., at the end of April. Committee members Louise Cross, Glendive; Alma Jacobs, Helena; John Van de Wetering, Missoula; Margaret Warden, Great Falls; and Executive Director, Bruce Sievers, Missoula, together with representatives of Humanities Committees in 46 other states, participated in meetings and discussions of the development of public programs involving professional humanists and the general public in explorations public policy issues.

The annual Jefferson Lectures in the Humanities are intended to bridge the gap between learning and public affairs by enabling scholars of international reputation to bring their knowledge and experience to bear on contemporary issues. Yale professor Robert Penn Warren, the only writer to have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for both fiction (*All the King's*

Men, 1946) and poetry (*Promises*, 1958) spoke on the subject "Poetry and Government." He reviewed what American writers have said about the nature and workability of democracy, and related their views to the future of our society.

CITIZENS FORUMS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In the coming months Montanans will hear more and more about a process called Local Government Review, and will be asked to elect members of Local Government Study Commissions. But very few people seem to be aware of what this all means.

That is the problem facing Lauren S. McKinsey, project director for a series of Citizens Forums on Local Government Review funded by the Montana Committee for the Humanities. The forums will be held in October in eight Montana cities, including Great Falls, Havre, Lewiston, Helena, Billings, Bozeman, Butte, and Missoula. They are intended to stimulate dialogue between concerned citizens, politicians, humanists, and others interested in the values and implications of the local government review process, and to contribute to the deliberations of the local study commissions. Each commission will study forms of local government through 1975 and conclude its work with a report and recommendations to the voters. Sometime in 1976 citizens of counties and municipalities will vote on whether to adopt the study commission's recommendations. Professor McKinsey stresses that it must be remembered that the intent of the Constitution article which provides for local government review was not that all forms of government be changed, but that the opportunity for change should be emphasized. The forums he is planning are an important step in the process of helping citizens to become better equipped to make public policy decisions, and to provide for humanistic input into the decision-making processes.

FUTURE OF THE FLATHEAD: IT'S YOUR CHOICE

Flathead County is changing. Daily evidence of the new pressures, challenges, and choices dictated by the forces of change can be seen in the heavier traffic on streets and highways, the sudden overcrowding of school and hospital buildings, the need for larger post offices and other public services—a whole multitude of needs that must be met. However, change can be directed. The most crucial step is to recognize the pressures change makes on your community and the county, and to try to better understand the problems and how to deal with them.

What can you do? Talk with your friends and neighbors, and find out what problems they see in the community. Then get more information about the problems and how others have handled them, and make this information available to others. The 4-H Foundation of Flathead County, under a grant from the Montana Committee for the Humanities, is sponsoring a series of discussions of public policy issues and changes facing Flathead County in an effort to help citizens gain a broader understanding of the problems and to consider different ways of responding to them in Flathead County. This series of discussions will consider questions such as those of:

Rural School Districts—with financial problems and overcrowding, is consolidation the only answer?

Water and Related Land Use—now that the Flathead's resources are receiving national attention, who has a right to decide how they will be used?

The Importance of Community—with old-timers and newcomers, what is it worth to know your neighbors?

Population Growth—what are the problems of providing services in incorporated areas?

Local Government Review—are you willing to take on the responsibilities of working together to strengthen home rule?

For further information about this project, contact Nancy Leifer, c/o Extension Office, Box 638, Kalispell.

NEW GRANTS AWARDED

The Right to Know Versus the Right of Privacy, sponsored by the Montana Press Association. A panel debate in conjunction with the Montana Press Association convention on August

17. Featuring legislators, newspaper editors, and a humanist.

Courts of Limited Jurisdiction Under the 1972 Montana Constitution, sponsored by the Montana Citizens for Court Improvement. Three one-day conferences in Missoula, Great Falls, and Billings on the function of courts of limited jurisdiction as instruments of justice and how citizen participants may work through the political process for possible change and reform. Featured are a professor of the philosophy of law, a political scientist, and a sociologist, as well as judges and lawyers.

Montana Agriculture and Politics, sponsored by the Blaine County Historical Society. A two-day symposium in each of five small Montana towns on the topic of the history and contemporary situation of agriculture and politics in Montana. Two history professors will be featured at service clubs in evening sessions.

Access and Involvement: Citizens' Role in Decision-Making, sponsored by the Committee for Public Information. Two panel discussions to take place in Columbia Falls and Hungry Horse. The panels are designed to enlighten and involve area residents on the power structure and decision-making patterns involved in past decisions to alter the climate of the Sough Fork area of the Flathead River by cloud-seeding.

Land Development and Environmental Quality: Toward a Humanistic Balance for the Flathead, sponsored by Flathead Tomorrow. Six one-hour videotape programs linked to the Flathead Valley Community College total community education video project. Programs are one-half hour documentaries on land use questions and development in the area, and half-hour discussions featuring humanists, scientists, and local officials, on the political choices involved. Scheduled for summer and fall of 1974.

Academics, the Small Town, and Political Reality, sponsored by the Brokedown Palace Project, Inc. A three-day workshop in Red Lodge on the unique political dilemmas of the small rural Montana town, particularly the socio-economic situation. A secondary focus will be on the relationship of outside academics to this dilemma and how they can be used as resource people.

Coal, Economics, and Politics: EXPO-74 Environmental Symposia Series Media Project, sponsored by Falls Creek Project. A multi-media presentation on the value conflicts and dilemmas of choice involved in

the coal development issue in Eastern Montana, followed by a topical symposium on the issue and subsequent programs in Montana. Now being shown at EXPO.

Pluralism and Industrial Society: Melting Pot or Cultural Mosaic?

Sponsored by the Ad-Hoc Committee for the Study of Cultural Pluralism. Panel discussion including an invited guest official from the Canadian Identity section of the Canadian Government, a foreign language instructor, a philosopher, a political theorist, and a political scientist.

Indian Awareness Week: Involving the American Indian in the Decision-Making Process, sponsored by Bilaminco, et. al. A week-long series combined with cultural activities dealing with the cultural integrity and political involvement of native Americans.

Workshop on Drugs and Drug Abuse: The Outlook for Montana, sponsored by the Psychology Department of the College of Great Falls. A two-week July workshop on political and social aspects of drug use, including the law on drugs and philosophical and religious perspectives on drug use. Included are an English professor, psychologists, philosophers, theologians, psychiatrists, law enforcement officials, state legislators, and others.

WHAT ARE THE HUMANITIES? WHO IS A HUMANIST?

The Montana Committee for the Humanities is a state-based program funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is intended to promote dialogue between academic humanists and others on issues of public policy.

The NEH defines the humanities as one of the following fields of study: language, both modern and classical; linguistics, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, ethics, comparative religion, archaeology, the history, criticism, and theory of the arts, and those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods. The term "academic humanist," then, refers to persons who are professionally trained in one of these fields of study, who are engaged in teaching and/or writing or research, and whose work is most often conducted in a college or university setting.

It is impossible, if no more than one opinion is uttered, to make a choice of the best: a man is forced then to follow whatever advice may have been given him; but if opposite speeches are delivered, then choice can be exercised. In like manner, pure gold is not recognized by itself; but when we test it along with baser ore, we perceive which is the better.

Herodotus, on freedom of discussion

Committee Notes

- MCH member Mrs. Margaret Warden of Great Falls has recently been elected National Secretary of the American Library Trustees Association and will attend their national meeting in July. Her term will be from 1974-75.
- Film-maker Dick Maney of Butte reports that his MCH-commissioned film on politics and the Montana Indian, "Outside the Melting Pot," recently won first place in a film festival sponsored by the Montana Institute of the Arts.
- A list of films and audio-visual selections from MCH-funded projects, which are available to the public free of charge, may be obtained by writing the MCH office in Missoula.
- The MCH staff will be happy to meet with groups anywhere in the state to explain the new theme and program possibilities, and help with preparation of grant proposals.

The Montana Committee for the Humanities

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